



Fact Sheet:



Environmental Prevention

Overview

Environmental prevention actions alter settings and conditions where alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD) are related to problem behaviors in the general populations. Since the late 1980's, the Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs has sponsored research and development of this approach which now has national support.

Environmental prevention is related to systems theory. It considers interdependent elements and their dynamic relationships, rather than addressing them as isolated parts.

Environmental prevention's goal is to reduce economic, interpersonal, and social costs imposed on a community, neighborhood, organization, family, or employer due to direct and collateral problems related to ATOD.

Prevention

ATOD prevention is defined as strategies, programs, and initiatives which reduce both direct and indirect adverse personal, social, health, and economic consequences resulting from problematic ATOD availability, manufacture, distribution, promotion, sales, and use. The desired result is to promote safe and healthy behaviors and environments for individuals, families and communities.

Process

Environmental prevention develops or modifies written and unwritten community standards, codes, practices, and norms, thereby influencing the frequency and severity of ATOD problems. This involves

cooperative efforts to develop support for solutions, formal adoption of plans, and follow-through to assure that the changes become sustained community norms.

Support beyond traditional individual-based ATOD prevention programs generates a common interest in having a healthy, safe, and less costly community. This complements prevention work within fields such as education, medicine, social services, and law enforcement, which focus primarily on specific individuals.

Environmental strategies focus on specific places (problem alcohol outlets, public areas, the workplace, shopping areas, and housing areas) or events, (graduation parties, sporting events, concerts, and street fairs) where ATOD-related problems, such as, (drug dealing, police incidents, loitering, violence, and public drinking) can be identified.

Environmental prevention operates through the persons who have responsibility for these places and events. In every case, the three interacting party's responsibilities for these places and events are:

1. Owner/manager of the property who has direct responsibility for what occurs at a place or event.
2. Occupants/neighbors who contribute most significantly to the problem.
3. Officials who have oversight of health, safety, economic, social issues of the setting. Interested parties include affected

employers, schools, faith-based groups and associations.

Successful environmental prevention requires a clear purpose that evolves from local assessment of problems. This expressed purpose is the source of motivation to attain measurable improvements. It must be strong enough to carry the action past challenges posed from interests benefiting from the current ATOD status quo and to assure that the changes attained are both enforced and sustained.

Environmental prevention shares common ground with the public health model, which describes problems in terms of relationships among:

1. The agent: ATOD which is capable of causing individual, social or economic harm
2. The host: a current, former, or potential ATOD consumer, either an individual or a group
3. The environment: the settings in which hosts and/or agents are found.

Environmental Prevention Examples

Approaches to alcohol problems:

- Ending sales before dark at public events
- Selling only single cup servings per person at public settings
- Responsible beverage server training
- Refusing alcohol sponsorship of community events
- Publicizing the use of cellular phones to notify police of suspected DUI's in progress
- Sober graduation events
- College campus drinking policies for under age students
- Social host norming

- Employer alcohol policies of no use during the work day and on expense accounts
- No alcohol at employer-hosted social activities and employer-sponsored team events
- Community police compliance checks for illegal sales to underage persons
- Zoning and land use conditions
- Social host training for servers

Approaches to illegal drugs:

- Water lawns in parks during evening hours to preclude activity
- Lighting requirements outside alcohol outlets where drug dealing/use occurs
- Classical music on outdoor speakers where drug users congregate
- Small court claims for nuisance properties
- Employer drug-free workplace policies and family EAP services
- Employer drug testing of applicants
- Available on-campus after school safe study rooms for grades K-12
- Colleges notifying parents about their children's alcohol/drug offenses
- Train retailers about products they sell that have potential for inhalant abuse
- Authorized compliance checks by underage youth for illegal tobacco sales
- "Take Back Our Street" activities
- Pharmacy practices to track prescriptions and identify abuse patterns
- Emergency room practices to identify, assess, and refer ATOD-related injuries,
- Community Oriented Policing

If you would like additional information on this subject, please contact the Department's Resource Center at (800) 879-2772.